MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

Maryland's Race to the Top
Early Learning Challenge Grant
Project Brief

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant will enable Maryland to create a seamless Birth to Grade 12 reform agenda to ensure that all young children and their families are supported in the state's efforts to overcome school readiness gaps and to move early childhood education in Maryland from a good system to a great system.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is the fiscal agent for the grant and its Division of Early Childhood Development takes the lead in implementing the funds. The Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education advises MSDE on the implementation of the RTT-ELC State Plan. Participating state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Maryland Department of Human Resources, and the Governor's Office for Children, collaborate with MSDE in support of the State Plan. Ten innovative projects address the scope of Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge State Plan.

Project 1   Local Early Childhood Councils

Create 24 local early childhood councils with the goal of developing local plans for implementation of Maryland's RTT-ELC state plan. Leadership coordination to local councils is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation over 12 months.

Project 2   Maryland EXCELS

Enhance and administer a full-scale implementation of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (Maryland EXCELS) through a qualified vendor. Support all public, private and community early learning and development programs to participate in Maryland EXCELS. Evaluate the effectiveness of Maryland EXCELS to include the relationship between quality ratings and children's learning and school readiness.

Project 3   Quality Capacity Building

Establish an Early Childhood Breakthrough Center to provide quality capacity building for programs participating in Maryland EXCELS and expand models of excellence to attendance areas of Title 1 schools in school improvement.

- Establish two (2) **Community Hubs** to provide and coordinate existing services for families with children, birth to five years of age.
- Establish five (5) **Preschool for All** sites in Title 1 attendance areas.
- Establish two (2) **Judy Center Satellite Sites** at Title 1 schools in school improvement in Baltimore City and Prince George's County and expand services from the existing Judy Center Partnership sites to other Title 1 schools.
- Provide coaching and mentoring for programs serving children three to five years of age who have an **Individualized Education Program (IEP) or an Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP)** under the **Extended Option** provisions of IDEA.

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Project 4   Promoting Use of Early Learning Standards

Revise the state's existing early learning standards to align with Common Core Standards. Develop a Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy to support the use of early learning standards and assessment. Implement two field tests of the Preschool Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program to 150 classrooms in Maryland EXCELS participating programs. Expand the language program, VIOLETS, to 150 classrooms in Maryland EXCELS participating programs.

Project 5   Professional Development
Maryland Model for School Readiness

Conduct professional development to promote the use of the early learning standards by all early learning and development programs.

Project 6   Comprehensive Assessment System

Revise the existing formative assessments (36-72 months), develop new formative assessments (birth to 36 months), and revise the existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment (Maryland Model for School Readiness) to align with the State adopted Common Core Standards. Develop training modules and professional development for the administration of state-recommended developmental screening instruments. Develop a technology platform for assessment administration with linkage to a reporting data base and on-line resources for early learning.   This project is conducted in collaboration with the State of Ohio.

Project 7   Child Development Innovations

Address the health and behavioral needs of children through a coherent set of early intervention and prevention programs.

- Field test and report on **Best Beginnings Developmental Screen** instrument birth to three, developed by the University of Maryland.
- Introduce the use of four state-recommended, valid **Developmental Screening Instruments** for children birth to five years.
- Conduct **Training of Pediatricians** through a qualified vendor on state-recommended developmental screening instruments.
- Build mental health capacity in pediatrics and family practice through **Maryland Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Pediatric Care** to include detection and intervention.
- Develop and implement an online data collection and analysis system for training participation and outcomes in **The Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL)** to interface with Maryland's Longitudinal Data System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse.

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Project 8   Family Engagement and Support

Create a **Coalition for Family Engagement** to develop a Maryland-specific Family, Parent, and Community Engagement Framework to implement strategies and training for all early learning and development programs and family engagement organizations.

- Create **Family Advisory Councils in Local Libraries** located in or near Title 1 attendance areas, including the establishment of Family Information Centers and resource kits for families of young children.

- Expand **Parent-Child Learning Parties** to 25 percent of all early learning and development programs in Title 1 attendance areas to promote the development of school readiness skills of young children.

- Expand the **Reach Out and Read Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics** to primary care physicians/pediatricians statewide. Distribute books and information to over 46,100 children and their families over the four years of the grant.

Project 9   Workforce Competency and Leadership Development

- Align the **Child care Credentialing Program** with the **Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework** to identify specific coursework for each of the credentialing levels.

- Initiate a **Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program for Early Childhood Education (MAAPP-ECE)** for working early educators with four-year degrees to obtain state teaching certification in early childhood education.

- Develop an **articulation agreement** for pre-service courses **between MSDE approved trainers and the state's community colleges** to establish new pathways of training and post-secondary education.

- Strengthen pathways for teacher education by improving the status of access to and transfer out of the **Associate of Arts Teaching (AAT) in Early Childhood**.

- Conduct **Early Learning Leadership Academies** for educators in public schools (Prek-2) and early childhood programs serving preschool-age children.

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Project 10   Early Learning Data System

Enhance the existing early childhood data system to link with the Maryland Longitudinal Data System.

- Expand the Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) portal with **Professional Development** services for early care and education providers including applications for grants, incentives, training approval and professional development plans.

- Activate a CCATS module to include **Grant Funds Management and Provider Benefits** in one web-based location and make data available for analysis in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System.

- Develop, pilot and implement a statewide secure system for **Attendance Reporting** for child care programs. Through an interface, use data to prepare Child Care Subsidy invoices.

For additional information on the 2012 – 2015 Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, visit the MSDE website at:
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge

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